



Priorities for the U.S.-EU Innovation Dialogue
Comments by the
DIHK – Association of German Chambers of Industry and Commerce
to the U.S.-Department of Commerce

The DIHK guiding principle in the field of R&D is that research and innovation policy should focus on the **great societal challenges** like demography or climate change and define general goals. As these challenges are global and reach beyond the European borders, they should also be tackled at an international level. Common positions can be shared and developed within a U.S.-EU dialogue. **Exchange of information and best practices** could be helpful in this perspective. A greater exchange of information and voluntary coordination of national and European research policies with the U.S.-policy in this field can be supported.

In relation to the question on **what specific technology areas and industry sectors the U.S. and EU should focus on** the DIHK recommends that R&D support policies should identify general priority areas and major goals but not prescribe specific technologies to achieve these goals. The DIHK supports a decentralised – “bottom-up” – approach by which the decision on the economic support of specific branches is taken in accordance with the economic sector.

According to the DIHK, the **free movement** of researchers and ideas and the **cooperation between science and business** must be improved, not only within the European Union but also at the international level. Therefore, the DIHK supports the opening of the European Research Area to internationalisation and a more intensive exchange with the U.S.

Similarly, **better mutual access to innovation fostering initiatives** can lead to more dynamic cooperation between U.S. and EU. This cooperation, though, should emerge bottom-up and take place in a first step within open frameworks like Eureka. As far as **Key Enabling Technologies** (KETs) are concerned, the DIHK points to the danger of discrimination among sectors and discretionary interventions that distort competition. Therefore, the decision to coordinate initiatives in these fields should consider the different national characteristics and the interests of business. The promotion of **business friendly framework conditions** is of major importance at the national and international level as well as a friendly transatlantic environment, but these conditions are relevant for all sectors and not only in the field of KETs.

The DIHK considers the **protection of intellectual property rights** as the central condition to reward innovation activities and creativity. At the European level, the agreement on the draft Regulation on the Community Patent is a very important step in the right direction. Nevertheless, intellectual rights protection must also consider the role of efficient protection and legal implementation especially in a more and more digital economy. In this field, the dialogue between EU and U.S. could lead to the exchange of best practices and thus to the development of better instruments.

In general, proposals to promote a transatlantic dialogue in fields like innovation in SMEs, demand driven innovation, etc. can be submitted. The worldwide network of the **German bilateral Chambers of Commerce abroad (AHK)** can deliver a good platform for exchange of knowledge and ideas. In the U.S. the AHK network includes five chambers in Atlanta, Chicago, Houston, New York and San Francisco together with the Representative of German Industry and Trade (RGIT) in Washington, our liaison office for the bilateral US/German political relations. The AHKs are supported by the German Federal Government being the official representation of the German economy and the German foreign trade promotion institution on foreign markets. The various experiences of our US AHK network could build a basis for the development of a structured dialogue on innovation and linked foreign trade and investment issues. Besides a contribution of the business expertise on political issues, a special sectoral focus of the AHKs lies on environment, renewable energy, energy efficiency and health care. With this regard, the chambers are already involved in German export promotion programmes. The next high level event within these business activities is the 2nd German American Energy Conference on March 22 and 23 in Berlin (www.gae-conference.com).

The DIHK is the central organisation for 80 Chambers of Industry and Commerce in Germany. All German companies registered in Germany, with the exception of handicraft businesses, the free professions and farms, are required by law to join a chamber. Thus, the DIHK speaks for more than three million entrepreneurs. Since 1958, the DIHK office in Brussels represents the interests of chambers of Commerce and Industry in Germany and abroad (IHK/AHK) and their members towards the European Union and its representatives.